



STATE OF CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

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Public Hearing – March 14, 2022
Transportation Committee

Testimony Submitted by Commissioner Joseph Giulietti
Department of Transportation

S.B. 390 - AN ACT CONCERNING REVISIONS TO THE TRANSPORTATION STATUTES.

The Department of Transportation (CTDOT) offers the following comments on S.B. 390, An Act Concerning Revisions to the Transportation Statutes.

Section 1: Golf Carts

Currently the Local Traffic Authority (LTA), within a town/city, may allow licensed drivers to operate golf carts during daylight hours along **municipally owned roadways** where the posted speed limit is 25 mph or less. The use of golf cart-type vehicles or similar on state highways would be a safety concern to CTDOT due to higher operating speeds and traffic volumes on state highways. Golf cart-type vehicles are not equipped with safety features to protect occupants during a crash or equipped with other safety devices such as head lights, brake/taillights, turn signals, and mirrors, and do not meet Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards.

Sections 2 and 3: High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) Lanes

The Department is unable to support “blood transport vehicle” (or similar use vehicles) use of HOV lanes because a blood transport vehicle is not included in the allowable exceptions under Federal guidelines (23 U.S.C. 166(b)(1)).

While CTDOT would like to work with the committee on this bill, safety on our roadways is a top priority. Language designating lanes on any state highway as an HOV lane is broad and may lead to unintended consequences. Designating specific lanes as HOV on roadways that are not multilane, limited access highways, will likely create capacity, operational, and safety concerns in the adjacent general-purpose lane(s).

Section 4: Wrong way Signs

This section would require CTDOT to install all wrong-ways signs under section 40 of public act 20-1, on exit ramps from interstate highways that are prone to motor vehicle accidents by January 1, 2024. CTDOT is currently designing a wrong-way detection systems pilot, which is set to be installed at 15 locations across the state. There are over 200 highway ramps identified as high risk and CTDOT would like to work with the Committee on this issue to reflect an adequate timeline for statewide implementation.

Sections 5 and 6: Local Transportation Capital Improvement Program (LOTICIP)

CTDOT is opposed to these sections. In 2013, the Department proposed and the Connecticut General Assembly authorized the Local Transportation Capital Improvement Program (LOTICIP) currently housed in CGS 13a-98. The LOTICIP program was designed to provide funding for improvements to state or locally-maintained roadways or facilities that are eligible for funding under the Federal Highway's surface transportation urban program. The LOTICIP program makes it easier for local governments to program and construct needed transportation improvements by eliminating the lengthy, burdensome and expensive administrative process connected with federal program's requirements and restrictions. In November of 2013, the program was launched with substantially fewer constraints and requirements, than those that exist when using Federal Title 23 USC funds. The two main goals originally conceived by CTDOT in the LOTICIP program were, (1) the ability of municipalities to perform capital improvements with less burdensome requirements, (i.e. do it their way); and (2) better utilization of State resources (staff) in the Federal-aid program on more regionally significant improvements on State owned facilities.

Earlier this year, Department leadership met with the Executive Directors of each COG to discuss several areas for collaboration and this concept was raised for inclusion on a future agenda for the next meeting with the COGs. Issues surrounding stewardship and oversight role in the administration of State transportation funds, financial responsibility, statutory authority for rights-of-way acquisition, and likely others would need to be thought through and resolved before a pilot program could begin.

Section 7: Town Aid Road (TAR)

CTDOT has concerns with Section 7. This proposal would expand the uses of the TAR grants beyond transportation purposes, for engineering studies and planning services related to efforts regarding flood mitigation and municipal stormwater planning.

CTDOT routinely hears from municipalities that they do not have adequate resources to maintain the roads in their community, or that they cannot support the installation of sidewalks due to lack of maintenance resources. The language included in this section would further dilute the intended purpose of the \$60 million awarded to municipalities each year which is intended to support the maintenance and upkeep of the local transportation systems.

It is important to note that the municipally owned bridges count against the statewide performance reported to FHWA, contributing to 5.5% of CT structures reported as poor. The 2021 FHWA data for National Bridge Inventory (over 20' in length) shows that 3.8% of CTDOT owned bridges (4,023) are rated in poor condition while 10.4% of municipal owned bridges (1,354) are rated in poor condition.

It should also be noted that the recently enacted federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act provides over \$100 billion in discretionary transportation grants that state and local governments will be able to apply for over the next five years. All federal transportation funded projects require a local match to be provided. TAR will be even more important for local governments to match any anticipated federal funding.

Section 8: Hartford Line Improvements

CTDOT is currently working on rail improvements on the Hartford Line that are in accordance with the five-year transportation capital plan and does not believe this should be codified in statute.

Section 9: Microtransit

CTDOT supports the development of microtransit services within the state and is currently developing a pilot microtransit program to test these services in more communities. Microtransit services are already successfully operating in the communities of Danbury, Old Saybrook, Norwalk, Stonington and Westport, and have been shown nationally to be of significant benefit to rural communities. CTDOT would like to thank the committee for their interest in this emerging transportation option and looks forward to working collaboratively on this topic.

For further information or questions, please contact Anne Kleza (anne.kleza@ct.gov) at the Department of Transportation, (860)594-3015.